



Revealing a Murderer's Guilt Without a Confession

KELLY FOREMAN | PUBLIC INFORMATION OFFICER

Miriam Helmick told police she planned to meet her husband for Chinese food at lunchtime. But, when Alan Helmick never showed and she couldn't reach him on his cell phone, she drove to their Colorado home to look for him. It was then she told police she discovered his lifeless body on the kitchen floor. Soon after that she made a fateful 911 call that would help prove she had a hand in her husband's untimely death.

Mesa County (Colo.) Sheriff's Sgt. Henry Stoffel, who was investigating Alan Helmick's death, read an article in the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Law Enforcement Bulletin entitled, "911 Homicide Calls and Statement Analysis: Is the Caller the Killer?" The article, written by Susan H. Adams, Ph.D., and Moraine (Ohio) Police Lt. Tracy Harpster, provided details about an investigative tool that gives investigators clues about the first report of a homicide — the 911 call.

Stoffel asked Harpster to review the Helmick case for clues about the murder.

"It's like so many of the other things we use," Stoffel said. "It's not an exact science that's been accepted in the courts, but it arms you with something else before you step in that interview with that suspect. So many times you only get one shot. When we have a homicide now, it's one of the first things we do — especially where it is a family member calling 911."

Miriam Helmick, a new-to-town dance teacher in the cozy town of Grand Junction, Colo., met her husband of less than two years when the widower joined her class, according to a Dateline NBC report on the case. Miriam also was widowed when her husband allegedly committed suicide in their Florida home two years before she moved to Colorado. She and Alan found a connection on the dance floor.

When Miriam Helmick called 911 in June 2008 to report the murder, she indicated her house had been robbed and her husband killed. But, Stoffel said the investigation revealed the crime scene had been staged. From there, the case took several bizarre twists and turns. Then Harpster and Adams analyzed the 911 call.

"A lot of the things [Harpster and Adams] talk about, she did," Stoffel said of Miriam Helmick. "Immediately she was trying to say, 'I wasn't here, I was at this place,' trying to prove herself innocent. 'He's dead, he's dead.' A lot of people

Analyzing 911 Calls